

hours after taking it), he was attacked with vomiting, and a general prostration of strength, succeeded by somnolency. At eleven o'clock the next morning, (being an interval of ten or eleven hours,) she was seized with similar symptoms. The family physician was now consulted. A portion of the suspected wine was given to a dog, who died in four hours after, with vomitings and convulsions. M. Chevalier was ordered to examine the liquid, and he found that it held in solution a large quantity of arseniate of potash.

An individual named Gieston was arrested on suspicion of having sent this wine, and on his trial, the above facts were proved.

The counsel for the defence presented the following questions, which they had submitted to Messrs. Jules, Barse and Devergie, with their answers.

1. Are the symptoms above stated, such as would occur from poisoning by arseniate of potash? They reply, that the symptoms from taking it in a dangerous quantity always occur speedily; in a quarter of an hour, half an hour, or at most three quarters. In this instance, the husband was seized at the end of three hours, and the wife, at eleven hours. This delay could not be explained by supposing that the stomach was full. In spite of this, absorption of the liquid would have gone on, and induced earlier indications of its poisonous nature. They deny also that drowsiness, somnolency, and chattering of the teeth, are symptoms of taking this poison.

2. What quantity of wine containing fifteen milligrammes of arseniate of potash per gramme of wine may be taken into the stomach, after a meal, without causing death? A wine thus charged, could not be taken, without inducing symptoms, if not mortal, at least much more severe than in the present instance. The witnesses say that *Fowler's Solution* is identical with arseniate of potash. Now twenty-two drops of this make a drachm, while eighteen drops is the extreme limit of safety. More than that will induce symptoms of poisoning, and M. Payeu has proved, that a person cannot gargle his mouth with wine in order to ascertain its taste (and not even swallowing a drop) without retaining on the mucous surfaces of the mouth, at least two grammes of the liquor, *i.e.*, double the dose necessary to induce severe symptoms. They hence ascribe the illness of both husband and wife to indigestion. *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 9th and 10th of Aug.-t, 1845.

This case requires comparison with the remarks of Christison. See his *Treatise on Poisons*, 4th Edition, pages 299, 300.*

T. R. B.

89. *Atropa Belladonna*.—Several deaths have recently occurred in London from eating the berries of this plant, the deadly nightshade. It seems that they have been extensively hawked about for "neatleberries," and recommended as nice for tarts, puddings, &c.

On a legal inquiry being made at one of the police offices, it appeared by the deposition of a female, that through such recommendation she had been induced to purchase a pint of them. The next day, being the anniversary of her wedding, she made a tart with the berries, after cutting off the stalks, and also cut up two apples, which she mixed with them, and, with her husband, partook of it. Her husband ate more heartily of the pie than she did. Before the remains of the dinner were removed, a customer came in to pay some money, and was accompanied by a child named Samuel Jones. The little boy looked very anxiously at the tart, and she gave him some. A few minutes after her husband had finished his dinner, he said he was drowsy, and went into the parlour. His lethargy soon increased, his countenance changed colour, and the pupils of his eyes became dilated. He said he had a very strange coppery taste in his mouth, and that he would go up stairs, and lie down on the bed. As he went up, he staggered, and upon entering his bed-room, fell, and became insensible. He subsequently became delirious and convulsed. She obtained an emetic for him, but could not get it down, as his teeth were firmly set. He attempted to strike her in his delirium, and when he recovered a little, said he was sorry and asked her to kiss him. These were the last words she heard him speak. He was conveyed to the London Hospital at seven o'clock the same evening, and died at ten the next day. The child to whom she had given some of the tart, died on the same

* A gramme is twenty grains; a milligramme one-fiftieth of a grain.

day. She did not eat so heartily of the tart as her husband, but she was very seriously affected. She experienced a nauseous taste like copperas, in her mouth, a tingling in the fingers, and stupor. Subsequently she lost the use of her limbs, and was still suffering severely.

Another lad deposed that he had purchased some of the berries from the hawker, and ate them, and soon after found his throat parched, and was conveyed to the hospital. A post-boy proved that after eating only half a dozen of the berries, they had thrown him into a high state of fever, and given a most unnatural redness to his face.

The hawker, who had been arrested, and who was now present, asserted that he had eaten whole pints of the berries without injury. He was remanded to prison, on a charge of manslaughter, and subsequently found guilty on this charge.—*Lancet*, August, 1846.

T. R. B.

90. *Death by Strangulation, Homicide, or Suicide.*—A female, aged 80 years, was on the 11th of June, 1845, found dead, hanging from a beam in the house where she resided. This house belonged to B. Buscatel. It consisted of two rooms on the ground floor, and a loft above, which was not planked throughout, except with a few loose boards directly over the place where the bed of the female was placed. She hired one of the above rooms, and Buscatel and his family occupied the other. The body was found hanging from one of the beams in the middle of the room, by a cord, which formed a running double knot round the neck. One end was thrown six times round the beam, and the other, which was loose, was thrown over a pile of vine faggots.

The ends of the toes were about three inches from the floor, and at about four inches from them, in front of the body, was a chair turned over on its back. Behind the body, was a ladder resting on the beam, to which the end of the rope had been attached. The head of the female was uncovered; her cap was at her feet, a little to the left. The countenance was stained with blood, proceeding from the nose and ears. On that part of the cap, which corresponded to the left ear, there was a bloody spot. So also on the neckhandkerchief, in the same place. The blood was coagulated and still humid. There were no marks of blood on the floor.

The rope also was spotted with blood. One was on a part beyond the reach of the hands, and the other on the loose end, and it was observed, that to the very extremity of this, a gray hair adhered. Indeed, several gray hairs were seen sticking at different parts of the cord.

The body was completely clothed. On the left sleeve, on the back of the left hand, and in front of the petticoat, there were stains of dust, still moist; so much so, that to the latter, there were grains of oats and pieces of straw adhering. And it was observed, that at a short distance behind, where the body hung, there was a crack in the floor, and in this were seen oats and straw corresponding in appearance to those attached to the petticoat. This spot was also moist.

The right knee of the deceased was covered with a spot of dried dust, but beyond this, there were no external marks of wounds or contusions.

Many of these circumstances contradicted the idea of suicide. The female was very aged and of short stature: the knot was of a kind but little known to females; there were no marks of blood on the hands; the bloody spots observed could not have been made by her, as they were beyond the reach of her arms; while the marks of blood and dust on the dress and on the left side of the face indicated violence, previous to suspension.

On dissection, Dr. Paris found that the root of the tongue was swollen and ecchymosed, and this ecchymosis extended to the palate. The mucous membrane of the pharynx and the cellular tissue between the os hyoides and the larynx were injected with blood, while the epiglottis at its base was also ecchymosed. Now the cord could scarcely have produced these effects, as it passed below the os hyoides, and not having broken that bone, could not affect the deeper seated parts.

There were also found, on dissection, in front of the clavicle, two ecchymoses, with blood infiltrated into the cellular tissue. No external appearance indicated this, and it was therefore evident that the force producing it must have been of a soft, yielding nature, like the fingers of the two hands resting on the clavicles.